Telecommuting and Electronic Homework in Canada

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Telecommuting and Electronic Homework in Canada

Introduction

This paper is based on a review of available literature on telecommuting and electronic homework which was undertaken in an attempt to explore related themes and issues.

Telecommuting or electronic homework is described as work done at home with a computer and a modem that is linked to a corporate database and/or to electronic mail systems. The term may also apply to the use of the phone for work normally done face to face. Some telecommuters will also utilize a fax machine, a personal copier or other equipment typically found in a modern office.

The extent to which electronic homework now exists in Canada is difficult to measure. Neither Statistics Canada nor the Conference Board of Canada keeps records in this regard. A review of the literature would suggest that while some telecommuters are employees of individual companies, others are self-employed contractors. Toronto's Hunter Group Inc. estimates that 1 to 2 million Canadians have a home office[1] but it is impossible to know which of these are employees and which are self-employed. The Financial Post has suggested that the real growth in Canada has come from entrepreneurs setting up small businesses at home rather than from employees opting to work at home.

There is some evidence to suggest that homework is not as widespread in Canada as it is in the United States and the United Kingdom. However, estimates on the number of telecommuters also vary in each of these countries. In the U.S. it has been estimated that in 1989, 26.6 million Americans did some income-producing work at home[2] and that this number may grow to 30 million by the year 1992.[3] While some studies suggest that as many as 3 million of these are telecommuters[4] others suggest that the number is as low as 100,000[5]. In the U.K. some surveys have predicted that by the year 1995, 10 -15% of the workforce will be working in the electronic office at home. It has been suggested that this figure is largely unreliable and that the quantitative evidence often contradicts the rhetoric[6].

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[1] *Financial Post*, April 19, 1989, p.34

[2] 28% were self-employed and 62% were associated with a company - *Financial Post*, April 19, 1989, p.27

[3] *Financial Post*, October 2, 1989, p.36

[4] *The Calgary Herald*, December 10, 1989, p.B9

[5] *The Toronto Star*, May 4, 1990, p.F1

[6] *Women in Management Review and Abstracts*, Vol.4, No.4, 1989, p.6. The author suggests that only 1.7% of international managers had plans to try working at home as a pattern of work in their firms in the next 5 years and 19.5% said they planned to drop existing programs, while only 12.1% intended to increase them.

It is also difficult to identify what percentage of telecommuters are women. In much of the literature, case studies focused on women. This was especially true of any article profiling telecommuters who are independent contractors. One U.S. study found that the male-female breakdown among telecommuters is almost 50-50.[7] It is impossible to know if these results may be extended to Canada.

In Canada there have been several employer initiatives in the telecommuting field. Many have been implemented on an informal basis. A review of existing literature suggests that there has been a greater trend towards the development of official policy on telecommuting in the U.S. To illustrate the application of formal policies on telecommuting, a discussion of the Canadian situation will be followed by a brief examination of existing American programs.

Private Sector Initiatives in Canada

At Esso Petroleum, a division of Imperial Oil Limited, an experiment with telecommuting began when a single employee asked to work from home for several days a week in order to avoid commuting to Metropolitan Toronto. Esso has recently approved homework for several employees in other departments but does not appear to have an official policy on telecommuting.[8]

Bell Canada has also left work-at-home arrangements up to employees and their managers. Officials feel that the potential benefits may be assessed on a case by case basis in this way.[9]

At Ontario Hydro, people who must be on call around the clock are assigned a laptop computer. Managers who have gainfully utilized computers at home have been permitted to keep them.[10]

However, at B.C. Hydro the development of a policy on work-at-home is now under way. In its human resource plan "Building Team 2000", Hydro reveals a commitment to developing a formal policy in the near future in order to meet the changing needs of its employees.[11]

Ontario Blue Cross also experimented with a full-time telecommuting program in the mid-1980's. The project grew to involve 10 clerks, but was discontinued after two years because of management changes and the installation of a new computer system that could not be

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[7] *Financial Post*, October 2, 1989, p.6

[8] *The Toronto Star*, May 4, 1990, p.F1

[9] *Ibid*

[10] *Financial Post*, April 19, 1989, p.33

[11] British Columbia Hydro, *Building Team 2000*, (Vancouver: B.C. Hydro Human Resource Strategy, 1990), p.20

used for remote work. A Blue Cross official reported that the program was successful.[12] According to a study carried out by Carleton University professor Linda Duxbury, telecommuters became more responsible, learned faster and had better comprehension than did the in-workers who participated in training or meetings.[13]

Manulife Financial in Toronto employs several telecommuters and the director of human resources there sees telecommuting as "the way of the future".[14]

Thomson Consumer Electronics Canada Inc. may provide the most striking example of the role that telecommuting can play in organizational restructuring. In 1989, Thomson cut its sales staff in half and closed its branch offices by equipping representatives with home offices. Officials predict that the company will save between $1 million and $2 million annually in rent, salaries for support staff, utilities and other costs associated with running branch offices.[15]

Government Initiatives in Canada

Bell Canada has tested new technology in three federal government departments - Industry, Science and Technology, Defence and Communications. This system allows a single telephone line to carry out many functions, depending only on how much compatible equipment one has at hand.[16]

Some ministries within the government of Ontario have experimented with telecommuting on a part-time or temporary basis. These arrangements are often informal and negotiated. Officials have commented on the difficulty of developing a single policy for over 80,000 employees.[17]

In Ottawa, the National Capital Commission commissioned a study of the concept of telecommuting and how it might be used to assist in planning for the future of the region.[18] The report suggests that traffic problems would only be reduced if the federal government

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[12] *The Toronto Star*, May 4, 1990, p.F1

[13] *The Toronto Star*, May 4, 1990, p.F1

[14] *The Toronto Star*, May 4, 1990, p.F1

[15] *OA, Canada's Office Automation Magazine*, Vol.5, No.6, June 1989

[16] *The Globe and Mail*, November 10, 1987, p.B17 - the technology that was introduced is commonly referred to as the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN)

[17] *The Globe and Mail*, October 2, 1989, p.C5

[18] K.A. Grant et al., *A Study of the Concepts of Telework and Telecommuting in the National Capital Region*, (Ottawa: Stevenson Kellogg Ernst and Whinney, 1987)

were to adopt a widespread telecommuting policy.[19] The report further suggests developing pilot projects with the federal government in order to study the impact that telecommuting could have on traffic congestion.[20]

The Treasury Board of Canada is currently developing a policy on telecommuting for the federal government.

Private Sector Initiatives in the United States

In the U.S., electronic homework appears to be gaining importance in corporate human resource planning. Several American organizations have attempted to develop policy on telecommuting in order to encourage employee participation.

The Pacific Bell Phone Company has a telecommuting program for which employees may volunteer. Unlike some other firms that have allowed limited telecommuting on a contract basis, participants in this program remain full-time employees at the firm with the same benefits, pay scale and opportunity for raises.[21] The company has also developed an official policy on telecommuting that presents electronic homework as a viable management work option that benefits both the company and the individual. The company plans to continue to study telecommuting, paying special attention to disadvantages or concerns, such as how to fairly evaluate the work performance of a manager at a remote location.[22]

Several other American firms, including Travellers Company and Mountain Bell Telephone Company have decided to give managers special training courses before putting them in charge of telecommuting workers. This approach answers concerns about promotion by teaching managers how to measure actual results rather than visible activity.[23]

Other U.S. companies with telecommuting programs include American Express, Johnson and Johnson, J.C. Penney, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, IBM[24], Amtrak, Prudential Insurance[25], Metropolitan Life, Control Data, National Bank of Chicago, Continental Illinois, Southern New

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[19] *Ibid*, p.23

[20] *Ibid*, p. 52

[21] *InfoWorld*, May 19, 1986, p.43

[22] *HR Magazine*, August 1990, p.52

[23] *Time*, October 26, 1987, p.97

[24] *Time*, October 26, 1987, p.96

[25] *Financial Post*, April 19, 1989, p.33

England Telephone, Seybold, Aetna Life + Casualty[26], Digital Equipment Corporation, DuPont Co. and U.S. West.[27]

The San Francisco earthquake of October 1989 has also increased interest in telecommuting and electronic homework. Closed bridges and damaged roadways cause commuting to be more difficult. In response, companies like Apple Computer have experimented with electronic homework.

Government Initiatives in the United States

Government in the United States has also experimented with telecommuting as an alternative to traditional work arrangements.

For example, in March 1990, the United States federal government introduced a program that will allow thousands of government employees to spend a few days working at home every week. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management hopes that participation rates will reach 3000 employees in 30 to 40 government agencies. In order to avoid isolation, government guidelines suggest a maximum of 3 days per week be spent at home.[28]

Los Angeles County, California plans to make 2000 of its employees telecommuters by 1991.[29] Telecommuting is now seen by planners there as a possible solution to traffic and pollution problems.[30]

Unions on Telecommuting and Electronic Homework

The union movement, in both Canada and the U.S., opposes homesewing and other forms of industrial homework. Likewise there is much concern about the use of alternative work arrangements like telecommuting and electronic homework. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU), for example, strongly opposes the trend toward clerical homework, viewing it as a step toward the replacement of full-time office positions with jobs characterized by reduced wages and benefits and eroded working conditions.[31] The "misuse" of

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[26] *Employment Relations Report*, Vol.8, No.16, 1986, p.4

[27] *Montreal Gazette*, February 26, 1990, p.B6

[28] *Montreal Gazette*, February 26, 1990, p.B6

[29] *The Edmonton Journal*, December 31, 1989, p.E5

[30] *Calgary Herald*, December 10, 1989, p.B9

[31] *Working Mother*, November 1986, p.50

telecommuting arrangements is also a prime concern of the AFL - CIO, which passed a resolution calling for a ban on computer homework in 1983.[32]

Unions have also expressed concern with the extension of homework during times of strikes or work stoppages as an alternative means of continuing production.[33]

In addition, there is some apprehension about telecommuting and its potential effects on the organization of women. Women, the least unionized now, may be more difficult to reach if they work from their homes.[34] This perception may be related to historical concerns about the exploitation of industrial homeworkers, who are also predominantly women.

Finally, unions are concerned that homework is being used by employers to transfer employees from a salaried or hourly status to that of an independent contractor.[35] Unions are concerned that at-home workers will be harder to organize, that they will be vulnerable to pressure from employers, that telecommuting could become a piecework cottage industry like the garment trade, that employers will try to supervise employees by monitoring their work through the computer[36] and that homework will be presented as a viable option to affordable day care.

Advantages and Disadvantages

In an attempt to assess the benefits to and concerns of employers and employees, the following compilation of views was undertaken. Although the list is not exhaustive, it provides some preliminary observations and certain themes emerge.

It would seem, for example, that employers are primarily concerned with cost reduction and increased productivity in considering a telecommuting program. The challenges for employers tend to relate to the development of new management techniques that may conflict with traditional methods of control.

For employees, the focus tends to be on the flexibility that working from home provides and on related monetary advantages. Many telecommuters seemed to be challenged by the personal and professional isolation associated with working at home.

The literature suggests that the experience of homework depends on a number of factors. An entrepreneur or self-employed contractor may experience telecommuting differently than would an employee. Indeed even employees may have contrasting experiences. For

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[32] *Management Review*, December 1989, p.42

[33] The Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia, *Labour Arbitration*, 1989, p.8.1.19

[34] *Ibid*, p.8.1.33

[35] *Working Mother*, November 1986, p.50

[36] *Put Work in Its Place*, p.67

example, a clerical worker engaged in electronic homework may encounter a range of challenges that a professional employee would not face. This theme will also be examined in the following pages.

Advantages of Homework for the Employer

1) an employer may reduce costs including overhead[37], support staff[38] and benefits[39] (the latter is true when employees are converted to independent contractors);

2) some employers have reported that homework increases productivity anywhere from 8% to 50%[40];

3) employees stay healthy and take less sick leave due to the elimination of stressors associated with the workplace[41];

4) homeworking arrangements are often made informally and as such employees may absorb set up and maintenance costs;

5) employees who work at home may be paid only for hard production (i.e. actual work done), for example, if the computer can monitor the number of characters typed, the employer can pay a piece rate accordingly;

6) employers may improve recruitment and reduce staff turnover (as those who might otherwise leave are given the option of working at home, for example, a valued senior employee nearing retirement[42]).

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[37] For instance, the cost of tools, office rentals, hydro or light, and travel expenses

[38] The need for clerks and secretaries will be reduced as homeworkers take over the duties performed by support staff

[39] For example, health insurance, vacation pay, pensions, U.I.C. contributions, life insurance

[40] *Newsweek* (April 24, 1989) reported (on page 59) that several companies have increased productivity by as much as 25%. The Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia, Labour Arbitration, 1989 (on page 8.1.12) reports that the Ontario Hospital Association experienced an 8% productivity increase while a Wisconsin Hospital program recorded a 40-50% increase. Mountain Bell, a Denver based telephone company, claims that its telecommuters are 35% to 40% more productive than in-office counterparts (Time, October 26, 1989, p.97)

[41] See *The Calgary Herald*, November 16, 1989, p.D2; *The Globe and Mail*, October 23, 1989, p.C5; *The Montreal Gazette*, September 23, 1989, p.K1; *Office Equipment and Methods*, October 1989, p.21; *The Financial Post*, March 7, 1988, p.41

[42] *The Futurist*, November-December 1988, p.30

Disadvantages of Homework for the Employer

1) a review of the literature suggests that many employers are concerned with the application of traditional methods of control and the challenges involved in developing new methods of supervising "location-independent" employees (learning to measure actual results rather than visible activity is an example);

2) some employers are concerned with the security of confidential information;

3) human resource management may require innovation when an employee works at home – tracking the development of interpersonal and other career related skills may prove challenging;

4) implementing a telecommuting program for large numbers of employees could result in office space that is not used and is difficult to sublet ;

5) employer may be required to cover the cost of insurance for the home office;

6) some employers are concerned about home safety standards and what constitutes an accident on the job;

7) the employee is isolated from developments both in the office and in the industry and some employers are concerned with how to bond a telecommuter to the company's corporate culture;

8) having employees at home increases communications and monitoring costs (although overall costs usually decrease);

9) employees who don't qualify to work at home may sometimes perceive the situation as unfair and this may affect the work environment at the office.

Advantages of Homework for the Employee

1) freedom to establish hours of work and self-direction - the sense of independence and self-reliance gained may enhance self-esteem and increase job satisfaction;

2) the elimination/reduction of expenses related to commuting and parking and the stressors associated with rush-hour traffic;

3) the elimination of expenses related to business dress and meals;

4) freedom from office pollutants like cigarette smoke[43] or workplace chemicals, although telecommuting should not be seen as an alternative to safe and healthy work environments;

[43] This will presumably change as more jurisdictions introduce legislation restricting smoking in the workplace

5) working at home increases flexibility for employees with family responsibilities.

Disadvantages of Homework for the Employee

1) personal and professional isolation;

2) interruptions may include fitting housework and paid work around children's schedules, illness, and neighbours and relatives who do not understand the employee's need to keep regular working hours;

3) the cost of couriers, photocopying, office equipment;

4) less visibility or integration in the system may lead to missed opportunities for training or advancement;

5) no vacation, sick days, and other employee benefits for telecommuters who are independent contractors;

6) reduction in earnings[44] for those transferred to a piece-rate system;

7) tendency to work longer hours, especially late at night to compensate for interruptions during the day[45];

8) stress as a result of electronic monitoring;

9) the costs of heat, light and other household utilities may increase.

Current and Emerging Themes

Telecommuting is not the Answer to Child or Elder Care Needs

It has been suggested that combining the care of children with paid work results in inadequate attention being directed to either activity. Critics of the homework system have long suggested that women engaged in paid employment at home must face being interrupted by the unpredictable needs of children.

As Canada's population ages, telecommuting may also be perceived as an option for those providing elder care. Demographers predict that, by the year 2031, seniors will represent

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[44] As a rule, in the U.K. telecommuters earn more than other homeworkers (for example, industrial homesewers) but less than in-workers in the same occupation - from *Women in Management Review and Abstracts*, Vol.4, No.4, 1989, p.8

[45] One study found that telecommuters put in an average of 62.4 hours per week - The Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia, *Labour Arbitration*, 1989, p.8.1.13

almost one-quarter of the population. Although telecommuting provides greater flexibility for those employees caring for an elderly relative, as with child care, interruptions prevent full attention to paid work.

Such interruptions reduce the amount of paid work completed. Laura Johnson suggests that it is their lack of choices rather than the ideal combination of work and family life that keep industrial sewers in the home[46]. Johnson further suggests that homesewers continually face the dilemma of being unable to totally respond to the needs of their children in order to continue sewing. This observation is also likely to apply to telecommuters and electronic homeworkers, especially those employed at a piece-rate.

Opportunities for harmonization of work and family through telecommuting are more likely to be a result of the increased flexibility that results from working at home. The time gained from not commuting to the worksite provides the telecommuter with extra time to spend attending to the needs of children and household. More flexibility is not enough to make electronic homework a viable alternative to child care. A telecommuter cannot fulfil the dual role of employee and caregiver at once.

Some employers have suggested that telecommuting may be particularly attractive for women who want to combine a career with family. This reinforces the idea that women are primarily responsible for caregiving and other domestic responsibilities. In actuality, telecommuting may be appropriate for both men and women under certain circumstances. To suggest otherwise could undermine the ideal of men and women sharing equally in the care of children and other domestic duties.

The union movement has raised the concern that women would be less likely to choose homework if they had access to support services like adequate quality day care.[47]

Turning Employees into Independent Contractors

Independent contracting or self-employment involves a profound departure from the employer-employee relationship. Employment standards, workers' compensation and other labour legislation often do not apply to workers in these categories. This classification therefore may facilitate savings for the employer in overhead costs that result from the payment of benefits and other incidentals. Financial repercussions could be serious for employees who are transferred to independent contractor status. A loss of benefits may be preferable to potential unemployment and the workers' choices are thus limited.

In the U.S., 8 telecommuters who were classified as independent contractors sued their "employer", California Western States Life Insurance Company for refusing to provide benefits

[46] Laura Johnson, *The Seam Allowance*, (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1982), p.86

[47] The Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia, *Labour Arbitration*, 1989, p.8.1.33.

received by other employees.[48] The company reached an out-of-court settlement with the workers.[49]

Electronic Homework and the Disabled

Working at home may be an attractive option for some persons with disabilities but concerns have been raised about telecommuting replacing efforts to integrate the disabled into the workforce.

Several North American companies have begun to experiment with programs for persons with disabilities who may be unable to find or continue work outside of the home.

Bell Canada has recently implemented a pilot project that allows persons with severe disabilities to work as long distance operators from their homes.[50] The first long distance operator position was filled in April 1990 and another nine positions will be staffed by the end of the year.[51]

In the U.S., American Express Bank introduced a pilot project designed to provide alternative work arrangements for the disabled. Telecommuters participating in the program are provided with a home office, have access to the latest technology and are regular full-time employees. Accordingly, participants receive all of the benefits of other full-time employees.[52]

Information on initiatives in this area is limited at best.

Networking and Other Methods of Avoiding Isolation

In Canada, most networking initiatives in telecommuting have been a result of the trend towards home-based business. Douglas Gray and Diana Lynn Gray have published a guide called Home Inc. - The Home-Based Business Guide.[53] The book discusses insurance, financing, marketing, time and stress management, growth, taxes and so on.

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[48] *Horizons*, September 1986, p.11

[49] *Newsweek*, April 24, 1989, p.60

[50] *Opening Remarks to the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons*, May 8, 1990, p.3

[51] Bell Canada, *Submission to the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons*, May 3, 1990, p.9

[52] *InfoWorld*, October 9, 1989, p.48

[53] *This Week in Business*, April 7, 1990

There is also an organization of home-based businesses called the Home Business Network. In 1989, the network reported a membership of 1000 Canadians. Members may also register in an annual directory and receive a newsletter six times a year.[54]

Although information on Canadian programs has not yet surfaced, there are some U.S. companies that have established support groups for their employees engaged in telecommuting. At Travellers Company, for example, telecommuters meet every two months "to discuss technical and personal issues, to help people come on board and reduce isolation problems".[55]

In addition, persons who telecommute from other cities or states sometimes travel to the main office on a regular basis. One telecommuter lives in Boston, and flies to New York every two weeks for face-to-face meetings.[56]

Summary and Conclusions

Measuring the extent of telecommuting in Canada is difficult. Official statistics are non-existent and unofficial estimates are tenuous at best. This problem is compounded by the difficulty in identifying the employment status of telecommuters.

Some telecommuters have volunteered or have been asked by their employer to work at home. The employee may be a manager, a professional or a clerical worker who is subject to a contract of employment with a single company. These employees are often able to make the move to work-at-home without loss of seniority or benefits.

Telecommuters may also be independent contractors or entrepreneurs who are self-employed and work on a contract basis for more than one company. As such they are not subject to a contract of employment and do not generally receive related benefits.

It is sometimes complicated to determine the status of a telecommuter. It can be helpful to examine the extent to which control is retained over the planning and hours of work. It may also be useful to establish ownership of equipment. The purchase of furniture, equipment and supplies may be indicative of contractor status. Conversely if the company for which work is being performed owns all equipment, it may be more likely that the telecommuter is an employee. Contractors may be more likely to risk a loss if deadlines are missed or if work is incomplete. Finally, the extent to which the telecommuter is integral to the enterprise may sometimes be indicative of employment status. A manager working at home is usually an employee. A data entry operator may be more difficult to classify.

However, all employees do not experience the transition to homework in exactly the same way. Time Magazine predicts that more and more professionals will have a choice between

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[54] *The Toronto Star*, May 27, 1989, p.H8

[55] *InfoWorld*, October 9, 1989, p.49

[56] *The Winnipeg Free Press*, August 18, 1985, p.18

working at home or at the office.[57] This usually means working at home to increase concentration for a part of the week or a part of the month. Professionals are often free to choose this option without loss of salary or benefits.[58] Professionals may also be more financially able to make alternative child care arrangements and thus to work without family-related interruption.

On the other hand, in industries where clerical work is primary to production (for example, in insurance), telecommuting may reduce wage rates and overhead by moving full-time jobs out of the office and into part-time piece-rate positions.[59] Although this may seem the perfect solution to combining work and family, it would seem more likely that women who telecommute for this reason do so because they lack access to quality, affordable day care.[60]

Indeed choice would appear to be a necessary condition for the successful implementation of any telecommuting experiment. Although telecommuting is not the ultimate answer to child or elder care, it may be a workable solution for some parents of young children. For example, a telecommuter who engages additional assistance with child care will be able to work without interruption, but may enjoy the opportunity to spend more time with children during a break.

Telecommuting may also provide necessary flexibility. For example, when a dual earner family is transferred, telecommuting may allow the other spouse to continue in their job during the period of transition.

Likewise telecommuting may be a bona fide option for some workers with disabilities. For persons who are prone to exhaustion or whose mobility impairment makes work outside the home difficult, electronic homework may be a viable means of earning and of pursuing career development. Telecommuting is not, however, an alternative to increased accessibility to the worksite or to full workplace integration for persons with disabilities.

The successful implementation of an electronic homework or telecommuting program would seem to be related to the intentions of participating parties. There is evidence to suggest that human resource planning must be carefully carried out and that special training must be provided to both employers and employees alike. Managers must learn how to measure the productivity of "off-location" workers in new and innovative ways. Managers must also ensure that telecommuters do not miss the opportunities for training or advancement that their "in-working" counterparts receive. It may be that pilot programs will fail unless such challenges are met.

Employers who introduce electronic homework without first providing for training or support services may find that cost reduction and increased productivity do not necessarily result.

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[57] *Time*, October 26, 1987, p.97

[58] *Worklife Report*, Vol.7, No.1, p.16

[59] *Ibid*

[60] Laura Johnson, *The Seam Allowance*, (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1982), p.86

Careful research and the adoption of new management styles are necessary in order to facilitate the successful introduction of telecommuting.

Employees must also make certain adjustments to a "location-independent" work arrangement. Learning to combat isolation seems particularly important to a successful transition. This may mean arranging to meet colleagues occasionally or taking advantage of company programs designed to eradicate the negative effects of being alone. In addition, telecommuters must learn to schedule work while also maintaining flexibility.

Electronic homework may be a viable option when it is undertaken with planning and care. However, it is important to determine the suitability of the individual and of the work to such a homework arrangement. The individual must engage in self-assessment when considering work-at-home; this means considering how successful the adaption to work-at-home will be.

While some work cannot be accomplished at home, some tasks are well-suited to "location-independent" arrangements. Jobs that are easily measured, require little unscheduled face to face contact and do not require access to files, equipment or supplies may more readily lend themselves to telecommuting.[61] Security concerns may also be considered in determining suitability to electronic homework.

Telecommuting is part of a larger trend toward alternative work arrangements that provide greater flexibility and enhance the quality of working life. Achievement of these objectives will largely depend on methods of implementation. The extension of benefits and the maintenance of wage levels will certainly be central to securing union approval of telecommuting initiatives. Beyond this, the future of electronic homework in Canada remains difficult to predict.

[61] K.A. Grant et al., *A Study of the Concepts of Telework and Telecommuting in the National Capital Region*, (Ottawa: Stevenson Kellogg Ernst and Whinney, 1987), p.25